Know Before Whom You Stand: A Prayer for the Journey
—Berachot 28b (adapted and recontextualized)

My prayer for us all: May we come to truly know the people we encounter in our lives. May we remember what our tradition teaches—each person is created in the image of God. When we seek to understand another, we not only learn about being human, we also experience some aspect of the Divine.

Erica Lynn Steelman

Erica’s family brought her into the world with a love of life and a deep love of Judaism. She grew up in Baltimore, where her Bubbie Minnie, z”l, Zadie Izzy, z”l, and Great Aunt Hannah, z”l, filled her childhood with Yiddish, delicious kosher food and endless torah. Her Uncle Sam’s wit continues to keep her engaged. Despite living in Los Angeles, her Grandma Bea has remained an important person in her life, as has Pop-Pop Irv, z”l.

Her rabbinic formation began with her earliest and most influential teachers: her parents, Barry and Sheila. They continue to teach through the example of their lives. She cannot thank them enough for their unending love, support, wisdom, humor, integrity, hard work and service to others. Erica’s brothers, Elliot and Michael, have kept her company along the way. They make her laugh and inspire her. Her life also is blessed with her sisters-in-law, Jocelyn and Dawna, her precious nephew, Jacob, and Brad and Bela.

Erica received a Bachelor of Arts from Brown University in history and Judaic studies. She received a Master of Public Policy with concentrations in environmental policy and gender and sexuality from UCLA. Erica devoted much time to researching and speaking about LGBT rights—in particular the right of same-sex couples to marry under federal and state laws.

While at RRC, Erica served on numerous committees, including one devoted to Torah lishmah, which she helped start. Erica completed Kol Zimra training and has led chanting in various contexts. She taught for three years at Reconstructionist congregation Mishkan Shalom, served as the intern for Hiddur: The Center for Aging and Judaism of RRC, worked for RRC’s student services and led teen High Holiday services at Beth El in Baltimore. She served as a rabbinic intern at the Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore and at the Abramson Center for Jewish Life. She appreciates the time spent in Jerusalem during her Modern Year.

Erica is grateful to the Source of All and for the many people who helped her to reach this point, including her teachers and fellow students, staff, alumni and other individuals she has met through RRC. She thanks Danielle, Andrea, Merle and the Rossmans for sticking with her. A special thanks to Joshua, a companion in love and growth. He has kept her grounded and kept it real.